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SUBJECT: MALI: 2009 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 109980

¶1. The following constitutes Embassy Bamako's responses for the 2009 country report on terrorism for Mali per reftel.

¶2. In contrast to 2008, 2009 saw offensive terrorist activity on Malian soil. On May 31, Al-Qa,ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) executed a British citizen, Edwin Dyer, who had been kidnapped in Niger on January 22 but was taken to and held in northern Mali along with several other western hostages. On June 10, AQIM elements assassinated Malian State Security officer Colonel Lamana Ould Bou at his residence in Timbuktu.

During the course of Malian military operations against the terrorist organization, AQIM ambushed a Malian military unit on July 4, killing at least 20 Malian soldiers. On November 25, AQIM proxies kidnapped a French citizen, Pierre Camatte, in Menaka, Mali. In addition, AQIM continued to use isolated and remote areas of northern Mali as a safe haven. Three Spanish aid workers and two Italian citizens kidnapped by AQIM in Mauritania during December are believed to have been brought into northern Mali, where they are currently being held. Although the kidnappings of westerners is a continuation of AQIM,s tactics in prior years, the execution of Edwin Dyer, the kidnapping of Pierre Camatte on Malian soil, and the attacks against Colonel Ould Bou and the Malian army are novelties that represent a significant departures from AQIM,s prior practice in northern Mali.

¶3. Following the assassination of Colonel Ould Bou, the Malians launched a military operation in northern Mali targeting AQIM. The Malian military effort included extended patrols through areas where AQIM was thought to be present, and resulted in engagements on June 15 and July 4. The beginning of rainy season led to a lull in military action. Mali continued to address terrorist financing issues. Mali's National Section for the Processing of Financial Information (CENTIF), which began operations in May of 2008, received eight reports of suspicious financial activities in 2009, although ongoing investigations have not yet revealed any links to terrorist financing or terrorist activity. There was no new anti-terrorism legislation passed in the National Assembly in 2009. Although the Malian government is aware that northern Mali is being used by AQIM as a safe haven, Mali,s long porous borders and a general lack of resources have hindered Mali,s ability to combat AQIM effectively.

¶4. Mali has expressed a willingness to increase regional cooperation against AQIM and terrorism generally. Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure has long called for a regional Heads of State Summit to be held in Bamako to discuss coordination of anti-terrorism efforts, including improving border monitoring and security. Although Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger have agreed to attend the Summit, a final date has not yet been set.

¶5. Mali is an engaged an active member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Mali is also an active

participant in U.S. programs including bilateral and regional military training and the Antiterrorism Assistance Training program.

¶6. Embassy Bamako's point of contact is Political Officer Fred Noyes, email: noyesfn@state.gov.

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